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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
Fifty-second session

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION

Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Cameroon

1. At its 1265th, 1266th and 1267th meetings, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination considered the tenth to fourteenth periodic reports of Cameroon as submitted in a single document (CERD/C/298/Add.3). At its 1273rd meeting, held on 20 March 1998, the Committee adopted the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's periodic report and the presence of, and opportunity to resume dialogue with a delegation from the country. It notes with satisfaction that the report complies with its guidelines and takes into account its latest conclusions concerning the State party. The Committee further notes that the oral information provided in a spirit of frank and open dialogue by the delegation of Cameroon was a useful supplement to the written report.

B. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

3. Note is taken of Cameroon's considerable ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, geographical and economic diversity.

C. Positive aspects

4. The Committee notes the State party's adoption on 18 January 1996 of a new Constitution that guarantees, inter alia, the protection of the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples and its ratification of numerous human rights conventions.

5. The Committee welcomes the establishment by a decree dated 8 November 1990 of the National Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms. It notes with interest the activities of that body.

6. The information provided on the composition of the population and the country's social, economic and cultural indicators is also considered very positive.

D. Principal subjects of concern

7. The inadequacy of the present legislation, especially the Penal Code, to enable the State party fully to discharge its obligations under article 4 of the Convention is a subject of concern.

8. It is regrettable that the report provides no figures concerning ethnic groups' representation at the various levels of political life and the civil service.

9. Protection of the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples to enable them to live in harmony in their environment is, especially as regards the Pygmies and Boro, a subject of concern in the light of article 2, paragraph 2, of the Convention and of the Committee's General Recommendation XXIII on the rights of indigenous peoples.

10. Information is required on the legal regime applicable to aliens living in the State party.

11. Concern was expressed with respect to article 5 (b) of the Convention about allegations of infringements of the right to security of person.

12. The absence of information on individual population groups' enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and access to development programmes and projects is regretted.

13. The State party's assertion that no cases involving discrimination, in particular based on article 242 of the Penal Code, are ever brought before the courts and that there is therefore no case law in the matter is a subject of concern in the light of articles 4 and 6 of the Convention.

14. With respect to the implementation of article 7 of the Convention, the information provided on measures to ensure equal treatment for ethnic groups regarding teaching, culture and information and to develop human rights training for law-enforcement agents is inadequate.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

15. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to review domestic law, particularly the Penal Code, in order to include in it all the provisions required by article 4 of the Convention.

16. With reference to paragraph 8 of the guidelines, the Committee requests the State party to provide information on ethnic groups' representation at the various levels of political life and the civil service and on their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

17. With a view to promoting and protecting the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, the Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures, particularly as regards deforestation that may harm such population groups.

18. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures provided for by the Convention to prevent and eliminate acts of racial discrimination against aliens.

19. The Committee recommends that the State party guarantee all persons within its territory, irrespective of race, colour or ethnic origin, enjoyment of the right to security.

20. The Committee requests the State party to take all necessary measures to guarantee freedom of expression to all persons, irrespective of race, colour or ethnic origin, and to guarantee freedom of the press.

21. With respect to the implementation of article 6 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party facilitate access to the courts for victims of racial discrimination so that the perpetrators of racist acts can be brought to trial and the victims of such acts can obtain reparation.

22. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to give full effect to the provisions of article 7 of the Convention concerning education, training and human rights information. Human rights training for agents of the State is especially recommended. The State party is also requested to take all appropriate steps to acquaint the population with the Convention and to publish the Government's periodic reports and the Committee's observations. The Committee further recommends that the State party strengthen its relations with associations and non-governmental bodies seeking to promote the rights recognized in the Convention.

23. The Committee recommends that the State party provide in its next report detailed information on the implementation of articles 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the Convention to supplement and update the still incomplete information given in the fourteenth report.

24. The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the amendments to article 8, paragraph 6, of the Convention adopted at the fourteenth meeting of States parties.

25. It is noted that the State party has not made the declaration referred to in article 14 of the Convention. A number of members of the Committee have asked that the State party consider doing so.

26. The Committee invites the State party to submit its next periodic report, due on 24 July 2000, as an update taking into account the points raised in the present observations.

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